

SCRIPTO-DICTO PARALYSIS MEDICORUM?

Doctors, clean your desks and avoid or cure Scripto-Dicto Paralysis Medicorum. Did you ever hear of this new malady?

A group of doctors met recently and one of them addressing his confreres said, "Have you encountered the mysterious physicians' complaint known as Scripto-Dicto Paralysis Medicorum? All confessed that they had not and inquired in chorus, "What is it?" "Three of you have it in an acute form," replied the first physician. "Well, give us your profound diagnostic conclusions," interjected one of the group. "Don't hold us in such intense suspense."

"Scripto-Dicto Paralysis Medicorum is very insidious," said the first physician, "and those who have it worst realize it least. It does not always make them suffer, but it makes others suffer."

"What a delightful disease to have," said one of the doctors who had been listening with an amused air. "Couldn't we give absent treatment to those who had our scripto-dicto what-you-may-call-them pains?"

"This is not a subject for levity," said the first physician. "It is making serious inroads on our best doctors. It attacks the busy doctor and he feels such fatigue after many calls that when he reaches his office he can neither write nor dictate. Correspondence nauseates him, and yet the only remedy is for him to clear his desk and get rid of his correspondence."

"There are two letters on your desk, and three on yours, and one on yours," he said, pointing directly at individual fraternal hearers, "all written by me, all on important subjects, all demanding prompt answers—and all unanswered."

"Say, Professor, I have piles of mail accumulated on my desk that I haven't time to touch," declared a surgeon who had just joined the group. "Another victim of our spreading malady," said the first physician impressively. "And now that I have diagnosed the case, what is the remedy? To cure your present attack assemble all the unanswered correspondence that has accumulated during this period of overwork. Call your stenographer and dictate proper answers to all. Avoid careless expressions that you would not care to see in print. Remember the letters you write may later appear in bold-faced type on the pages of the daily press."

"Why, Professor, you almost persuade me to leave the letters unanswered. I feel a fresh attack of that Scripto-dicto discovery of yours coming on," said a surgeon nervously. "If some of the letters I have carelessly written or dictated in the past were to appear in bold-face type everyone in the community would be laughing but me."

"Well, we'll hope that no evil consequences will flow from past inattention, as I would not enjoy reading some of my hasty dictation in printed form either," said another.

"Yet, you must admit," said the diagnostician, "that a professional man is often measured by the propriety and promptness of his correspondence. So answer your correspondence promptly and prop-

erly. Clean and keep your desks clean, and I guarantee a complete recovery from your present severe attack of Scripto-dicto paralysis medicorum."

STATE PSYCHOPATHIC HOSPITAL.

A bill has been introduced into the Senate by Senator M. B. Harris of Fresno (Senate Bill No. 429), and into the Assembly by Assemblyman Bennett of Santa Clara (Assembly Bill No. 389), providing for the establishment, government and maintenance of a State psychopathic hospital.

The purpose of this hospital as stated in the bill is the study of abnormal mental states, their nature, causes, results, treatment and prevention; education regarding such abnormal mental states; the dissemination of knowledge in such matters; the care, observation and treatment within the wards of such hospital, out-patient department, or elsewhere in the State of persons suffering from insanity and other abnormal mental states; the investigation in any part of the State into the primary or precipitating causes of insanity; to co-operate with local or State authorities and institutions in preventing abnormal mental states and aggravation thereof by unfavorable environment.

As to the location, erection and management of the hospital, the bill provides that it is to be under a "board of trustees consisting of the medical superintendent of the State hospitals, the president of the Medical Society of the State of California, the deans of the medical departments of the University of California and Stanford University, a neurologist and psychologist and two other persons not physicians, at least one of whom shall be a woman, which last four persons named shall be appointed by the governor. The board shall acquire in the name and on behalf of the people of the State of California, lands and rights in lands in the city and county of San Francisco, upon which they shall erect, equip, furnish and maintain a building or buildings suitable for said hospital. The said building or buildings shall be sufficient to accommodate at least one hundred patients and the necessary officers, physicians, nurses and employees, and to provide for general administration, treatment rooms, laboratories and an out-patient department.

"So far as not inconsistent with the provisions for the maintenance of State hospitals the board of trustees shall provide for the government and maintenance of this hospital. They shall provide for such out-patient departments, laboratories, social service, field work and co-operation with public officers and institutions as they may deem necessary and advisable. They shall appoint and define the powers and duties of the director of the hospital and such physicians, officers and employees as they may deem necessary.

"Out of any moneys in the State Treasury not otherwise appropriated, there is hereby appropriated the sum of two hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary for the preliminary purposes of this bill."

That there are strong reasons for the establish-

ment of a State psychopathic hospital, aside from those of reconstruction and rehabilitation, is attested by letters which have been received from physicians working in the field of psychiatry and neurology and many other citizens since the bill was introduced into the Legislature.

Physicians all over the State should do everything possible to secure the passage of this important measure through communicating with the Governor, their representatives in the Legislature and the Board of Control.

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOSPITAL.

In another column will be found a description of the Los Angeles County Hospital by its superintendent, Norman R. Martin. It is an institution of which the medical profession and other citizens of Los Angeles County may well be proud.

It is to be regretted that an editorial recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*¹ reflected seriously on the professional standing and internships of this hospital.

Fuller investigation and better acquaintance with the facts of the case would doubtless have led to a very different judgment.

The situation is very accurately summarized by Dr. Martin as follows: "The average daily population of the Los Angeles County Hospital for the past fiscal year was 1008 patients. It is the only public hospital serving the City and County of Los Angeles with a civilian population of approximately one million people. It treats every disease except smallpox. Since war was declared it has contributed 118 doctors and nurses to the service, this including the Medical Director, Assistant Medical Director, and Superintendent of Nurses. Our internship covers a period of eighteen months and the United States Government drafted our internes in ten to twelve months, making a very difficult situation to meet. The civilian sick had to be taken care of, regardless of these heavy drafts on our professional department, and it was necessary to make temporary appointments from among candidates for civil service examination at the time."

Examinations for internes in the Los Angeles County Hospital are conducted by the Civil Service Commission of the County at thirteen points in the United States, including Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Cincinnati, New York, Boston, Minneapolis, Omaha and San Francisco. Under the California State law, osteopaths may qualify for the physicians' and surgeons' license by due examination, and are then entitled to the same rights and privileges as regular physicians. It is therefore not in the power of the hospital to exclude osteopaths from internship, provided they have been certified as eligible by the Civil Service Commission. If fault there be, it lies with the medical practice act as enacted by the Legislature.

In addition to these and other minor circumstances, altogether tending to make the temporary situation in the Los Angeles County Hospital most trying, is to be reckoned the influenza epi-

demic. It was absolutely necessary to care for these added patients at once in the best manner possible. It was absolutely impossible to preserve the exact standards of normal peace times.

Instead of the hospital deserving censure, it deserves full credit for maintaining efficient professional work and for meeting abnormal and excessive emergencies, both in spite of heavy and unusual handicaps.

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

Do not fail to read Dr. Lengfeld's thoughtful and practical reviews each month in the Department of Pharmacy and Chemistry. His warning against "a union suit which fits everybody" is most timely.

In startling contrast to the present-day scientific nurture of boyhood, the Boy Scout movement, etc., is to be noted a Connecticut state law, Revision of 1702, aimed at the small boy on a hot Sunday afternoon. "No person . . . shall swim in the water in the evening preceding the Lord's Day or any part of the said day or the evening following, . . . nor use any game, sport, play or recreation on the Lord's Day. Penalty 10 shillings."

All doctors not now licensed in California, who are, or have been in military service, and expect to locate in California, should read the letter in this issue of the *JOURNAL* from Dr. Pinkham, secretary of the State Board of Medical Examiners.

Our confreres, the dentists, are working for the legal establishment of a system of dental nurses, who would be a powerful influence in the development of preventive dentistry and early thorough oral hygiene. Trained dental nurses would perform simple prophylactic operations in schools, public institutions and dental offices under the personal direction of registered dentists. The idea is strongly to be commended.

The United Fruit Company, which operates a line of fast fruit steamers between Atlantic Coast ports, West Indies and Central America, has found as a matter of business experience that it pays to conduct a modern well-equipped medical department. Twenty-three physicians are engaged in this work and their activities cover the sanitation of ships, terminals, and company industrial developments, the care of sick and injured employees, and the provision of medical service to outside persons where other physicians are not available. Perhaps their most important duty lies in the realm of disease prevention. This is naturally a matter of considerable importance in the tropical regions where the company operates. That it pays is shown by the fact that the percentage of cost of operating the medical department to the total operating cost of the tropical divisions was 0.87 in the year just finished.

¹ Jour. A. M. A., Jan. 4, 1914.